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Control of Troops When Dispatching Them on Assignment from an Interior Military District

by

Colonel I. Yakovlenko,
Colonel N. Aksenov

For a number of years during operational and combat training in the Ural Military District, we have been studying the problem of the control of troops, who were fully mobilized in an interior military district, when dispatching them into an operational area after a nuclear war has begun. The experience of exercises and war games, and material from military science conferences enable us to make some observations about this problem.

The troops of an interior military district, on instructions of the General Staff, will be dispatched on assignment mainly by rail transport. The direct organizer of operational rail transportation is the staff of the district. On the basis of the decision of the district troop commander, the staff works out the transportation plan and the directive for the troops -- which are the basic control documents for rail transportation -- and monitors their implementation. The transportation plan usually is drawn up on a map with the necessary calculations attached in the form of tables, legends, and graphs. All chiefs of the directorates and departments of the district staff take part in working it out.

We know that single or massed enemy nuclear strikes can very seriously complicate the transportation situation in a military district. On the railroads, many obstructed areas and zones with high levels of radiation are formed, which disrupts the continuity of military transportation and may lead to delays of several days in dispatching the troops. Therefore, as the experience of operational training shows, the planning and organization of rail transportation carried out in advance and at the beginning of mobilization may not correspond to the situation prevailing at the time the troops are dispatched and will require refinement or even a fundamental change. Under such conditions, troop loading areas, the sequence for dispatching the troops, and the number of troop trains for large units and units had to be changed.

So that the plans would be realistic, the staff of the district forecast the general situation, especially the radiation situation which

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might develop within the military district at the beginning of a nuclear war. Based on the results of the forecast, main and alternate troop loading areas and approaches to them were established so that they would be subjected to the effect of enemy nuclear strikes to the least possible extent.

With a view to reducing the number of changes and amendments at the beginning of a war, the plan for transporting the troops by rail should be worked out in several variants based on the possible destruction of railroads and installations on them.

Calculations concerning the troop trains are worked out during peacetime in the staffs of large units and units. These calculations must be made for the different levels of manning and equipping in a large unit and for dispatching it in different directions, for example, dispatching it to the west or east. In addition, there should be a loading plan, which was worked out earlier, and a loading order. Commanders and staffs of large units and units must be familiar in advance with the loading capabilities of railroad stations located near mobilization areas, with the roads approaching them, and with possible waiting areas for loading.

Subsequently, all this work will significantly accelerate the working out or amplification of a workable loading plan after the combat instructions are received to dispatch a large unit or unit for an operational purpose. Thus, at the command-staff exercise with a motorized rifle division in June 1967, approximately four hours were spent in organizing the transportation of the division using documents which had been worked out earlier.

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Bearing in mind the disposition of the troops in a large area, the difficulty of organizing communications, the incomplete complement of the principal staffs at the beginning of mobilization, as well as possible losses in the troops and staffs as a result of nuclear strikes, the dispatch of the troops of a military district on assignment should be controlled from a command post deployed by the district via the command posts of the large units, individual units, and military transportation organs by combining the principles of centralization and decentralization.

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For operational control of the dispatching of troops, a single center for collecting and collating data on the situation is necessary. There is now no such center at the headquarters of the district. The operations department, the organization-mobilization directorate and the chiefs of the branch arms and services gather the data. This is a multistage process and

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sometimes leads to a duplication of information.

The operations department, in our opinion, must fulfil the role of such a center. However, in view of the nature of its table of organization and the functional level of training of the officers, at the present time this is extremely difficult.

We believe that in such a center, besides officers of the operations department and the organization-mobilization directorate, officers of the branch arms and services of the district should be included. This center should be concerned with: the collection of data on the radiation situation, which has been preliminarily collated in the computation and analysis station and computation and analysis groups, and of information on the progress in mobilization; the calculation of the status of the troops and of the degree to which they are supplied with all types of materiel reserves; and the determination of the traffic capacity of the transportation routes in the district; etc. At the center, there should be a single map of the situation on the basis of which the staff would be able to work out well-founded proposals to be used by the troop commander of the district in making a decision. All basic instructions for the troops of the district must come from this center.

Such a center probably can be organized at the headquarters of a military district at the beginning of mobilization and dispatching of the troops without particularly disrupting the organizational structure and without increasing the T/O strength. However, this proposal naturally requires further practical verification during command-staff exercises and war games.

Operations groups must be sent to monitor the progress of troop mobilization in areas having a large number of large units and units to be dispatched, and to directly organize the dispatching of troops and monitoring of the timely departure and movement of troop trains from the time that increased combat readiness is declared. These groups were established in our district from officers of the staff and of the directorates and departments of the district, headed by deputies or assistants of the troop commander or by other responsible persons assigned.

Such groups may be located at the outlying posts of the civil defense staffs of the oblasts and oblast military commissariats, or in the staffs of large units. Operations groups must possess full authority and have all the information necessary to monitor the dispatching of troops in the area designated, to render aid to the troops and restore combat effectiveness

and, when necessary, to independently make decisions on changing loading areas and stations.

Measures for the protection of troops against weapons of mass destruction, which are planned and organized by the staff on the basis of the decision of the troop commander, promote, to a significant degree, the acceleration of the dispatching of troops and the more organized conduct of their dispatch under the conditions of a nuclear war. The results of study and the experience of command-staff exercises and war games point out the necessity for the staff of a district to work out plans during peacetime for radiation, chemical warfare and bacteriological reconnaissance, and for the elimination of the aftereffects of an enemy nuclear attack.

In case of the delivery of nuclear strikes by the enemy, the priority task of commanders and staffs is to take measures to restore the combat effectiveness of the troops, and above all to restore control. In so doing, the rapid collection of data on the radiation and chemical situation is extremely important. Information about the ground zeros of the nuclear bursts, their yields, and weather conditions will be received from the radar sites of large units and units of the Air Defense of the Country. The computation and analysis station of the district and computation and analysis groups of large units must operate in close contact with them; collated data should be reported to the unified control center of the district. Only in this case can the dispatching of the troops be monitored and the restoration of their combat effectiveness and control of them be organized.

When dispatching troops, continuity of control may be achieved when communications operate continuously. Considering that the net of underground cable communications lines within the district is not well developed, and taking into account the possibility of a great amount of destruction of overhead communications lines, radio communications should be considered the main means of communications under the conditions of a nuclear war. Of course, the use of the remaining communications lines of the Ministry of Communications and the Ministry of Rail and Road Transport is not ruled out.

In peacetime, it is advisable to develop the radio communications of the Ministry of Rail and Road Transport and the Ministry of Defense at the same time as the available fixed means of communications on the railroad lines. When dispatching and transporting troops the district staff must have a radio receiving-transmitting center set up. For large interior military districts, radio-relay, and especially tropospheric,

communications should be widely developed.

The troops involved in the transportation must be permitted to use radio communications only when railroad communications lines are destroyed, and to use only the types of radios designated in advance, the R-102M2 and R-118BM3, for example. The latter should be distributed among the trains as appropriate.

Since the problems of controlling troops when dispatching them from an interior military district for an operational purpose were studied together with other important problems concerning the organization and carrying out of this dispatching, it seems advisable to us to share a number of our views on some other problems.

Under modern conditions it is not sufficient to load the troops being dispatched onto troop trains; it is also necessary to ensure their further, uninterrupted movement along the railroads. An entire series of measures must be carried out for these purposes. Thus, with the least expenditure of forces, means and time, by changing the direction and regulating the flow of train traffic, it is possible to bypass obstructed areas. The survivability of railroad junctions is increased to a large degree, and the continuity of the movement of troop trains through them is ensured when railroad bypasses are constructed in advance, and when rail lines belonging to various ministries are skilfully used for this.

One of the important measures ensuring the continuity of troop transportation under the conditions of a great amount of destruction to railways and the installations on them is the establishment of temporary transshipment areas; based on the experience of exercises often conducted in the district, this measure has completely justified itself. Thus, the full mobilization and deployment of a temporary transshipment area can within two days provide approximately 25 to 30 percent of the peacetime traffic capacity of a railroad line.

However, in order for temporary transshipment areas to carry out their tasks, it is necessary to take certain measures in advance, in peacetime: to prepare railroad stations or sidings for unloading and loading troops and cargo; to improve automobile roads and approach roads; to assign forces and means to organize ferry crossings across a water obstacle; and to prepare waiting areas and troop assembly areas, as well as decontamination areas for personnel, equipment, and rolling stock.

Thus, specifically, according to exercise experience a ferry crossing using two 1,000-ton barges can be ready to receive troops and cargo within 15 to 20 hours after the full mobilization of the temporary transshipment area. On the average, one train with heavy equipment crossed in two hours and a train with light equipment, in two hours and ten minutes (the planned norms were two hours and 30 minutes). Troops and cargo can be put across on bridges constructed from barge-platforms instead of on ferries, which significantly shortens the duration of the transshipment process. However, this requires theoretical research and practical verification of the capacity to lay a floating bridge made from barge-platforms over rivers more than 600 meters wide.

Concerning the dispatching of troops on assignment mainly by rail transport, it must be mentioned that in the case of the destruction of railroads and buildings on them by enemy nuclear strikes, a significant amount of time can be required to restore rail transportation; according to calculations, even up to 15 days may be required. In these cases, the troops will be forced to negotiate areas of destruction and zones of radioactive contamination in march columns. In making provision for similar circumstances, it will be necessary in peacetime to increase the number of motor transport subunits in interior military districts and to set up auxiliary fuel reserves in advance.

The possibility of using motor vehicle transportation on a large scale is inconceivable without beforehand improving the quality of the road network and expanding it within the military district. In order to successfully fulfil the tasks confronting the district, it is advisable to have district road units even in peacetime. They would be able to continuously construct roads within the military district on orders from the oblast organizations, thus combining national economic requirements with the interests of road preparation in a theater of military operations.

Under the conditions of massed nuclear strikes inflicted by the enemy, the importance of transporting control organs, including those of the army, by air increases considerably. Thus, at the war game conducted in the district in 1967, it was planned to transport the army field headquarters up to 3,000 kilometers by air. For this purpose, one military transport air regiment with AN-12 aircraft was assigned, and 6.5 days were needed to transport the field headquarters.

In our opinion, the problem of airlifting the personnel of tank units, which were fully mobilized in an interior military district, to areas 800 to 1,000 kilometers from the national border requires further research and theoretical and practical verification. It is advisable to set up tank storage bases in these areas, and to complete the manning and equipping of the tank units immediately after the crews arrive.

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